

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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KESTELL OF GREYSTONE.

A SERIAL STORY.

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"A Faïre Dame," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN LONDON ON BUSINESS.

BEFORE Mr. Kestell drove off to Greystone, he went upstairs to his wife's boudoir. Symee was there, just preparing her luncheon. Mrs. Kestell was sitting by the fire, looking so young and handsome, that it needed no great effort of imagination on the part of her husband to remember the courting-time.

"Well, Symee," he said, noticing, as he frequently did, with kind words his wife's confidential maid, "have you heard lately from your brother?"

Symee raised a gentle, pale face up to her master.

"No, sir, not very lately. Since he left he seems so changed, and does not like writing letters; but he does his work as usual. Perhaps it is rather a busy time at his office."

"Yes, I am sure it is. You are a good friend to your brother, Symee; the best he has."

Symee had retired towards the door, and in answer smiled gratefully at her master. His words were balm to her heart; for she often grieved secretly about Jesse. Yes, he was changed; and she put down the change to her refusal to live with him.

Mrs. Kestell was altogether more genial and sympathetic now to her husband. This was caused by the excitement of Elva's wedding; for otherwise her life had flowed on without a want or a care, almost

without an untoward event. All trouble was kept from her, owing to her fancied ill-health.

"So you are off, Josiah. Are you sure it will not hurt you? I don't think Pink understands you at all; he didn't understand my case in the least."

"Yes, dear, I am much better. I saw the young people off just now on their expedition. I think we shall be told they make a very handsome bridal pair. Still, Elva does not come up to her mother."

He stooped down and kissed the hair which showed so few silvery threads.

"I was certainly the best looking of our family; but my sisters were so vain that they were always telling me I was nothing to look at."

"I undeceived you there, I think," Mr. Kestell smiled. That courting-time was so full of happy remembrances, that it seemed only like yesterday; and yet, here was his elder daughter going to be married.

"The first week in January," he said, suddenly. "There is really nothing to wait for, is there?"

"Oh, nothing; and lovers are a little tiresome after a time. Elva will miss the country; the girls have been so spoilt. Very different from the Fitzgerald girls, who were brought up so strictly that they have no ideas of their own now. I am sure our system was much the best; and the proof is that a very rising man, who has the pick of London society, selects Elva, and falls in love with her at first sight."

Mrs. Kestell's system had been the "laissez faire," not from choice, but because she had no authority over her girls. Mr. Kestell knew this well enough; but he would not have contradicted his wife for the world.

"Yes, dear, you are quite right; the proof of any system is in the result, and the result in Elva is perfect."

"And in Amice, too. You don't understand all her good points. She is quite the comfort of my life when I can't have Symee. By the way, Josiah, you will never allow Symee to go away, will you?" Mrs. Kestell looked up at her husband in a confiding manner, and with a troubled look in her eyes.

"Of course not, dear. Your comfort, you know, has always been my first thought."

A dim ray pierced the nearly ossified brain of Mrs. Kestell, and that ray showed her the long years of faithful devotion, the perfect kindness and goodness of the husband, whom her own people had made a favour of accepting as one of the family. She held out her well-shaped, delicate hand with a very sweet smile on her lips.

"Yes, dear, your devotion has been the great blessing of my life. How could I have lived through so much illness and suffering without it?"

"Thank you, darling," he whispered, stooping down; and these thanks came from the bottom of his heart.

The pause that followed, during which he kissed the hand and the unwrinkled forehead of his wife, seemed to him like stepping into a new garden of Eden, as if he had suddenly come upon a beautiful oasis in an arid desert.

Still feeling this, he walked away to the door.

"Good-bye, darling. Take great care of yourself till I come back. I will call Symee."

One more look at his wife, and then he was gone, and very soon Amice, from her window, saw the brougham drive off to Greystone. To her the horses' hoofs upon the gravel seemed to say: "Who was John Pellow? Who was John Pellow?" till the sound ceased in the distance.

Mr. Kestell did not drive straight to his office, but made a détour to the inn, where Button still lay, neither much better nor much worse. In answer to Mr. Kestell's enquiries, mine host, who came to the door, answered that there seemed to be a turn for the worse this morning, and that the doctor who had called had looked a bit grave. Mr. Kestell quickly slipped a sovereign into an envelope, and asked the landlord to give it to the invalid. After which gracious act of charity he drove off, saying aloud to himself—why, he knew not, as

surely thinking it would have served the purpose:

"Poor fellow! I fear he will only drink it. But he expects it of me, I am sure he does; and one does not like to disappoint an invalid."

When he reached his office, he dismissed his carriage. This office was, in fact, the lower storey of a large, substantial, red-brick, Queen Anne house, in the upper part of which his partner lived; for the Kestells had for years been inhabitants of this house before the great rise in wealth which had made this present Kestell of Greystone a county man.

Mr. Kestell now appeared to be in a great hurry; he had an interview with his partner, quickly, well, and wisely settled a few difficult business details, and then said he should not stay longer to-day, and that he was not to be expected next day. He wrote a telegram, which he put into an envelope, and told a clerk to take it to the post-office in the afternoon; after which, Mr. Kestell walked away, and went to the railway-station.

He took his ticket for London, and choosing an empty first-class carriage, he bribed the porter to lock him in. "He wished to do a little business in quiet," he remarked.

This business must have been purely mental, for when the train moved on, Mr. Kestell folded his hands, and hardly moved all the way to town. Once he murmured: "I fear I cannot get home this evening; but Celia will get the telegram. I have done such a thing before—yes, when we were involved in that bank failure, I stayed away all night. She will not think anything of it. Poor darling! How like her old self she was this morning. Yes, everything is worth while for her—everything."

Mr. Kestell, once in London, recovered his energy. He did not even wait, as he often had done before, to help a distressed female to get her luggage. More than once the benevolence of his countenance had caused him to be appealed to by single ladies, who would have confided even their purses to such a man. And, in truth, never had his help been asked in vain. More than one old maid told stories about "That very kind gentleman who was so good to me."

There was no time to-day, however, for outside philanthropy. He took a cab, and drove at once to the business place of Card and Lilley, sent in his name, and was

soon admitted into the private room of Mr. Card. Lilley had somehow been swallowed up by Card, who, however, still kindly advertised his non-existent partner.

Mr. Kestell knew Jesse did not work in the room visitors went through, so he did not expect to see him; indeed, after the first preliminary civilities, and the usual sympathetic confidences about the past, present, and future weather, he at once said:

"Is Vicary still with you?"

"Yes, certainly; we should have advised you of it had he left."

Mr. Card always said "we" in loving memory of Lilley.

"Yes, of course, I know; but still in the press of business things are forgotten. I came here to consult you about him."

"After the handsome premium you paid for him, he is, I hope, giving you no trouble."

"Well, I don't quite say that. However, young men must be young men; and lately I have detected signs of restlessness in him. I have talked very seriously to him about it; but you know, if once the spirit of roving gets into a young fellow, he is not fit for much steady work afterwards."

"Yes, yes, certainly," said Mr. Card, rubbing his hands slowly; "but I wonder we have seen nothing of it. However, you know, Mr. Kestell, there is no lack of clerks at present. The applications are a perfect nuisance; so, if you wish in any way——"

"No, no, I don't wish," put in Mr. Kestell. "I am only thinking of your interests. I am going to see him to-day, and if I find him still bent on roving, why, I shall not refuse him my sanction any longer."

"It is very good of you, I am sure; the fellow ought to be ashamed of disappointing you. Still, I must say he does his work well and intelligently. Indeed, we half thought we should raise him; but, if you say he has other ideas, that will not be worth while."

"Thank you; I will do my best to make him see reason. Say nothing to him about my visit. It might only make him more obstinate."

"Of course not, Mr. Kestell."

Then the two men for a few minutes plunged into a business talk, after which Mr. Kestell very soon took his leave.

"Strange that Kestell of Greystone should bother himself about that Vicary,"

thought Mr. Card when his visitor had gone. "The young man must be a fool if he throws up this chance. Something behind it, I suppose," and not troubling himself to consider the question, Mr. Card resumed his work. If Vicary threw up his situation, he would of course lose, as it were, the benefit of the original premium. That, however, was nothing to Mr. Card; and clerks could be had in plenty.

Mr. Kestell next consulted his watch; he had yet some other business to do, and waiving the question of lunch, he took a cab, and called at several Colonial Emigration offices and land companies. Here he informed himself about matters concerning the taking up of land, and of buying farms; took away a goodly heap of printed matter of information on these various subjects; and then, hot and weary, he at last reached his club, and ordered an early dinner.

"I had better go and see Vicary to-night," he thought, "and have the thing over at once."

Quite unconscious of the coming visitor, Jesse reached his lodgings this evening with that clock-like regularity as to time which made 'Liza say:

"Mr. Vicary he is a regular gentleman, and never keeps the kettle boiling over for his tea, as some people does."

There was a great alteration, however, in Jesse now, since his return from the country; a change which showed itself in little things, which would have told any tender, careful watcher that he, Jesse, was passing through a time of intense mental suffering. But there was no one to note these little signs, and Jesse had to get through it as best he could in silence.

He was quite used to a rough life; that was nothing to him. Before this, on coming home, his bounding step, his cheerful greeting to 'Liza, all told of hope; but now these signs were gone something had taken its place, and that something was a mechanical and dogged perseverance in a work which was not congenial to him.

This particular evening Jesse had felt the power of this demon of hopelessness strong upon him. There were two natures fighting within him, and the fight was all the more powerful and terrible because, till that fatal evening, Jesse had had a strong belief in himself and his own power. It was not conceit, because it was founded on a firm trust and belief in God, a belief founded on the experience of his youth; but, nevertheless, though he still clung

tenaciously to his faith, the hour of temptation had come to him, as it comes to every man, and the battle of life had to be fought. On the loss of the battle, or on its victory, it is not too much to say depended all Jesse Vicary's future higher life. And the battle was not a question of hours, but of many days. Already now had he spent many an hour in his small room fighting with evil thoughts, as if they represented evil spirits, and were tangibly there before him.

Shame is the hardest trial for man to bear—shame, that is, that is felt; and shame had seized upon Jesse with a deadly power. He had been able to tread the path of poverty, and to see sin around him, and to know that he despised it; now as he went his habitual round, he seemed to be followed by a lurid light which mocked God's sunlight, and which showed him sin under a new form.

"Thou art no better than these," said a mocking fiend, "no better than these, except by chance. Thou, too, art an outcast in the great, cold, cruel world—a mere uncared-for unit, and not a member of the beautiful patriarchal family which has raised, through a series of spiritual evolutions, human beings from the level of the brute creation. With all thy pretensions, thy high thoughts, thy self-sufficiency, thou art no better than these outcasts."

Again and again had the poor fellow thrown himself on his knees, and wondered if his religion were on a par with his former pride, a mere sham? Had it been built up by reason of his respectability, and like a house of cards, easily blown down by the breath of public opinion? Or was it something deeper—more real than this?

He wanted the answer, and the answer came not; so that, suddenly rising, unable to lift his mind higher than himself, he would once more begin his round of reasoning. In fair weather how easy he had found it, how powerful had been his anger against scoffers, and now—ah, well, his punishment had come. Even doubts crowded in; doubts which had seemed so easy to refute before; doubts which he had again and again argued with others, and his arguments had proved powerful. But now what irony of fate was this, that all his past words rose up and laughed him to scorn, while his answers looked more like gossamer creations, which a breath could blow away?

When he went out to visit his friends in the street, or sat as before near Obed

Diggings's daughter, all his power of comforting seemed gone away. Even Obed's gaunt figure, and his infirmities, not caused by teetotalism, began to appear natural to Jesse. Why had he fancied before that he could reform any one? Was it not a case of "Physician, heal thyself"?

Now and then, at rare intervals, however, Jesse had a flash of different and less desponding thoughts.

With the loss of what he had deemed dearest and best, he had lost much motive power; but, after all, where lay his fault? The sin of the parent is to be visited upon the children; but does that visitation imply any disparagement of the child? Surely not. To his own Maker he standeth or falleth; and has not every man the right to ask and to claim justice from his Maker?

"I have no birthright," thought Jesse, during one of these happier moments; "but God gave me the right to live and the right to ask for justice. I believe, I believe in the right. God help me."

Jesse grasped this belief with a thanksgiving felt, not uttered; for true belief, that belief which is the only one worth having, is rare, it must be a heavenly gift, so wonderful and powerful is it, and, if denied, some great purpose must be meant to be answered by its absence.

Then, all at once, Jesse lost it again, a curtain was let down and hid it from him; but still his first germ of hope lay in the thought: "The other day I had it. The truth shone out, and for a short time I grasped it."

A very small comfort, however, when the battle had to be fought again; when the motive-power of life seemed worth nothing; when vague notions and strange temptations crowded in, and he asked himself, "Why not try to enjoy those pleasures in which others have found some compensation for ruined lives?"

This evening, on his way home, a passer-by had put into his hand a paper on "Individual Liberty." Jesse had lost some of that healthy curiosity of anything new, which makes men clear and correct in discriminative judgement. He glanced at it, and read some of the paragraphs on Taxes and Rates, and the Evils of Governments. He was not much interested with all this; but, on the last page, he found a few lines which caught his attention:

"Peace, happiness, progress can only

exist on one condition, that men are not struggling for this hateful power over each other, that they desire to be free themselves, and to allow all others to be free."

"What is freedom?" he said to himself. "Did I not once believe it to be a firm standing-ground in the world, from which one could climb above others? That standing-ground is gone, and I imagine the climbing to be impossible, and feel that I must stay at the bottom among the common herd. But was that freedom? Suppose there should be another kind of freedom, the freedom from all ambition centred in self? But, without ambition, how is good work to be done? Can there be selfless ambition? May not there be a spiritual level which has not one connecting link with the material? In that case, may I not look for it even in Golden Sparrow Street?"

Had not he, all his life, inseparably associated the spiritual with the material, made the one utterly dependent on the other; had his first basis been utterly wrong? On the other hand, might not the one be merely a result, nay, a necessary result of the other?

It was a new thought, and with a smile of pleasure Jesse rang the bell for 'Liza to take away his tea-things.

"Shall you be going out, Mister Vicary?" asked the little maid, who had also, long ago, given up country ideals of a clean face, and was content to be a resting-place for smuts.

"No, 'Liza, not to-night; I think I'll do some work at home."

The tea-things having disappeared, however, Jesse sat down by his small fire, and did not work; Symee's decision had taken the heart out of his after-hours study; he knew that, in time, he should relapse into the clerk pure and simple, a slavish machine with a contracting instead of expanding brain. With a little sigh of impatience he heard 'Liza's step again. Her affectionate regard was, at times, aggravating.

"If please, Mr. Vicary, there's a visitor for you; shall I show him up? He's a gentleman."

"It's Mr. Hoel Fenner," said Jesse to himself, with a sudden gleam of gratitude, for Hoel had not made a sign since Jesse had rejected his offer.

"Yes."

'Liza shuffled down, and soon threw open the door again, to usher in—Mr. Kestell!

All the fierce storm of days past burst forth again in Jesse's inner spirit, but outwardly he merely behaved as was befitting his position and that of his visitor.

PÆSTUM AND THE PARTHENON.

UNTIL a few years ago, it was almost as dangerous to visit Pæstum and its temples, as to venture upon a battle-field in the thick of the fray. The Apennines which rise so boldly to the east of the triangular plain which abuts on the Gulf of Salerno, and in the southern angle of which the classical little place is situated, were a famous resort of brigands. They could have had no better eyrie for their work. Even without a telescope they could see very distinctly the carriage or procession of carriages which gave animation to the long, straight, white road trending towards Pæstum. They had thus ample time to make their plans. By-and-by they descended from their perch, moved with caution from one piece of woodland to another, until at length they were shrewdly ensconced in this or that grain-field bordering the high road. The dust which attended upon the progress of the vehicles meanwhile drew nearer and nearer to them; and at length the moment arrived when the rogues, in admirable concert with each other, lifted their ill-favoured, swarthy faces from out the barley stalks, and levelled their guns at the luckless tourists, with the conventional threats if the coachmen presumed to disregard their summons to halt.

In fancy there is something exhilarating in such a picture as this. But it must have been detestably annoying to the victims. The bandits were wont to appraise their captives in a very arbitrary way; and they were very loth to reduce their valuations. Thus, the hapless and penniless tutor of my Lord Plantagenet was seized for my Lord Plantagenet himself; and was made significantly to understand that, unless about fifty thousand pounds was forthcoming from the Plantagenet estates by return of post, his intellectual ears would be cut from his head as a sign that the profession of bandit was a solemn reality, and as a token of worse things to follow if the money were not sent without fail upon the second demand.

However proud the tutor may have been to play scapegoat for his young pupil, he was sure ere long to groan cruelly about

the hardships of life among the brigands, and especially if the police were seized with a fit of energy just at the time. Forced marches by day and night over mountain-tops, incessant soakings from the merciless clouds, broken sleep in the open, and a diet of raw offal, intermitting with fasts of three or four days in duration, were likely soon to try his constitution to the uttermost. And he would, at the best, have the bitter assurance brought home to him that, even though he might eventually be able to return to his dear native land, he would infallibly take a mortal or chronic disease along with him as a lifelong memento of his dolorous adventures.

Thank Heaven such chances no longer brood over the visitor to Pæstum. In the old days it was hardly worth the attempt to see the temples. But now, when there is a railway-station close to the old Greek gate of the walls of the ruined city, and nothing more formidable to face than the possibility of a touch of fever, the man who finds himself within a hundred miles of Pæstum must reproach himself if he does not journey to it.

What a sweet, jocund country is that which intervenes between Naples and Pæstum! Vesuvius and Pompeii cannot lessen its brightness. What though the lava be descending the dark flanks of the volcano, and seeming to threaten the dead skeleton of Pompeii, even as, two thousand years ago, it overwhelmed the living body of the place! One does not anticipate evil in this part of the world. If it comes, it comes, and that suffices. But in the opinion of nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, though the menace be ever so stern, they have only to hasten to the famous church on the cinder heap between Pompeii and the mountain, and loudly entreat the local Madonna to intercede for them. If the Pompeian Madonna had been domiciled in Pompeii in A.D. 79, we should, they will assure you, have no such spectacle now to see as disinterred Pompeii affords us.

Faith like this, and the fertile, dark soil of the land, work wonders for the happy Neapolitans. Small marvel if they sing while they till their gardens, in which orange, and fig, and cherry-trees thrive in the midst of maize and potatoes, over which, in their turn, the vines festoon from tree-trunk to tree-trunk. No impoverished soil this, which can bear three crops at the same time, and bring each crop to perfection! And there is beauty here as well as exuberance. For

the mountains soar from the gardens with delightful abruptness, and through the midst of the forests which cover their sides rills of clear water descend from lofty springs. It is the very country for the practice of brigandage as a fine art. The mountains have such fantastic shapes that they fashion a number of dells and upland basins, hard, indeed, of access, but yet so near to the villages among the fruit-trees, that a stone thrown from them might fall on this or that red roof of a cottage. With Nature so ardent in temptation, even an honest man might here be seduced into a life, illicit enough, but with such a fascination of freedom, and such opportunities of profit. These hills and gardens by Salerno are, in fact, so lovely, that even hardened travellers cannot be phlegmatic about them. They contest with the Italians themselves, who perchance see the same prospect every day of their lives, for the best window-pane of the railway-car, whence to look forth upon them. The Italians utter enthusiastic interjections of praise of what they see; and in his heart, if not with his tongue, the veteran sight-seer does likewise.

There was a roll of thunder from the dark clouds low upon the Apennines when I set foot on the Pæstum railway platform. It had been a ride as tedious as it was pleasant in its prospects, with an average pace of but twelve miles an hour. But what of that! It is well to get one's energies under curb for once in a way. I had also had the more time to mark the graces of the pestilential flat across which, for the last hour of our journey, we had crawled methodically. In old days this part of Italy was famous for its buffaloes, and for a certain venomous fly—gad-fly or otherwise—which was told off to make the life of the buffaloes a severe trial. It is much the same still. The buffaloes were to be seen standing knee-deep in the heath of the plain, or among the poppies or stubble of a garnered field, or in the yellowish waters of the River Sele, which swirls its stream from the snow of the high peaks of the hinder Apennines. And now and then, if the furious agitation of their tufted tails meant what it seemed to mean, the insect pest was still strong to irritation.

There was a gaiety of colour, also, on this thinly-peopled tract. Here an olive-wood, silver-grey in the sunlight. Anon, an open meadow of bright grass, freshened by a water-brook, and scarlet with shading of anemones; in the midst of

the meadow an old gnarled tree, beneath which the white sheep lie panting; the tree itself graced with a light veil of vine-withes, and a bower of convolvulus bright with bloom. Yonder, a conical hut of straw, grasses, and reeds, interwoven round a centre pole of fir. 'Tis a shepherd's residence, just such a one, out of question, as the shepherd's ancestor, to the fiftieth or sixtieth generation, also dwelt in, ere yet the land had got used to the colonising feet of the Greeks from Sybaris, who came hither to build the wonderful temples and a city. In some parts they are making hay, and the perfume of their labour is blown by the breeze through the railway-cars. But it is hot work for them under a cloudless June sun; and while we pass they recur to their wine-gourds, and tumble themselves down upon the grass beneath the forked sticks, which, aided by the coats they set upon them, afford them some slight shelter from the sun. Houses are few in number. The rare farm-building nestles in a grove of eucalyptus, as if to hide itself from the Angel of Pestilence, who stalks here through the months of summer and autumn, and takes toll of the people. The faces one sees at the little white railway-stations of the plain are sallow and emaciated as a rule. They are like the faces of the "crackers" of Florida: a mean race of whites, who eat clay for pasture, and whose skin takes the colour of clay.

There was no other passenger for Pæstum except myself. It was late in the year for the tourist throng. Doctors in Naples put their veto upon such an excursion when the summer heat has begun. In the spring the visitors here number about five hundred a month; in the winter two hundred; but in the summer and autumn no more than nine or ten. The garrulous custodian of the temples might as well leave them open to the world, free of payment, during the bad season, as stay dallying about the gates that he may offer his services to one stranger in three days.

The city is close at hand. The courteous official of the station—to whom every stranger is doubtless a "my lord" in disguise—would, if I wished it, have left his office and all his responsibilities to look after themselves, and have played the part of guide to me. But it was unnecessary. The road ran straight from the station door to an arch of white travertine, only a few paces distant. The arch stands linking rampart to rampart, and as a conduit

for the track beneath it. The ramparts are the old city walls, built by the colonists from Sybaris in the year 600 B.C., or thereabouts; and the arch itself is one of the city gates.

Living and moving mortal, save myself, when I have passed through the gate, there is none in sight. For the moment, the temples themselves are hidden. The track goes by the side of a wall, enclosing the gardens of a certain stately villa, the only thing of its kind in Pæstum; and on the other side of the track are fields of barley ripe for the sickle. The sculptured capital of a column, or a bit of a frieze, sticks up from amid the barley here and there; but this is all that speaks of Pæstum past or present. Not quite all, however. Away to the right are the red roofs of ten or twelve houses—all within the bounds of the city—and the turret of a church. Here the miserable remnants of the people of Pæstum struggle through life as best they may. They make an execrable wine, harsh and heady; and all save about a dozen of them exile themselves to the mountains when the fever is in its most deadly mood.

One of these desolate villagers meets me at a turn of the road, where the byeway strikes, at right angles, the old main thoroughfare of the Greek city. He salutes in the deferential manner that speaks eloquently of his condition. He is degraded by his sufferings; so that he is apt to regard a healthy, upright man as the Greeks, his forefathers, were wont to regard one or other of their benign divinities. But there is also more than this in his salutation. He is the merchant of curios of Pæstum. Poor merchant! The little canvas bag which he unties with trembling fingers contains nothing but a number of absurd trifles which it were a waste of time to examine: morsels of marble; obliterated coins; and bits of bronze which may be, as he says they are, a yield of the Pæstum vineyard, but which may also have been sent to him from Naples for the deception of the enthusiastic stranger. And so with a suave "*Bon viaggio!*" which may be taken to mean "*A safe departure from Pæstum,*" the poor fellow goes his way, and I am hard by the most northern of the three famous temples which have made this little old city a bye-word and a place of pilgrimage.

My reader will not thank me for an architect's description of these temples; and I am glad to think that such a de-

scription would be little apt to give an idea of them and their forlorn beauty. What does it matter whether they are fifty or sixty yards in length, twenty or thirty in breadth, and whether their columns be twenty-five or thirty-five feet in height? To my mind it is much more significant to know that the temples have stood thus, swept and bereaved of all their portable parts, for an indefinite number of centuries; that the people of many nations have for ages looked upon them with ridicule, contempt, wrath, or stupefaction; that a multitude of storms have burst upon them and harmed them not; and that still they stand strong and beautiful as the human ideal of the admirable race who were their authors.

Of the three temples, that dedicated to Neptune—the middle one—is at the same time the largest and the noblest. It is almost twin brother to the Parthenon of Athens. It is of the same sturdy Doric order; its columns have the same colour of ripened grain, which may be bronze or gold, according to the force of the sunlight; and it impresses in like manner. But, for the rest, nothing could be more dissimilar than the situation of the two temples. That of Athens is on the crest of a rock; this of Paestum is set flat on the plain. The sea is five or six miles distant from the Parthenon, yet it is as if it were but a stone's throw away; so commanding is the Acropolis, that the interjacent plain of Piræus seems expunged when one is on the temple steps. Whereas, on the other hand, here at Paestum, though the sea is not more than half a mile distant, it is as if it were miles away; for the level ground makes a deceptive horizon, and it is only by the sound of the surge that one has any presentiment of the ocean. But both the temples are again alike in their naked majesty. Lord Elgin and others have stripped the Parthenon; and the Paestum temple is equally dishevelled, though who can say by whose hands?

At Athens, the Acropolis surface is bestrewn with fragments of temples. There is little space for vegetation and such flowers as Nature sets upon man's ruined handiwork. But at Paestum it is different. The temples are hedged round about with tall grasses, thistles seven feet high, brambles, and a myriad of bright flowers, which hide among the thick stems of the more aspiring plants. If one leaves the narrow track which goes from the house of the custodian to the temple, one is absorbed by the meadowy thicket. The bees buzz

at one's ears, and it may chance that the sinuous form of a snake darts over one's feet with a frightened hiss, which for a moment puts an end to the romance of one's surroundings. There are many snakes at Paestum. The custodian will tell tales of them for your entertainment; how they may be seen climbing the marble walls of the temple in quest of the unfledged birds which are hatched in the pediment and the crevices; and what satisfaction he feels when he is able to kill one. The snakes give a charm to Paestum which the Acropolis lacks; but it is a charm better appreciated in memory than by ocular regard.

While I loiter in and about the temple the thunder continues to boom from the mountains towards us. But it is merely a local manifestation. We are under a cloudless sky. It is so hot that even the Paestum wine is welcome. And it is so still that the waves of the Mediterranean creep upon the sands without even an audible murmur. The custodian ventures a suggestion about Paestum's fascination by moonlight. There is no hotel in the place; but his own white house is at my disposal. If I am an artist, I am especially entreated not to miss the opportunity of such a feast of fancy. No doubt he is right. Paestum's attractions are of the kind that the moon sanctifies and quadruples. Who that has seen the Parthenon, Melrose, or Tintern by moonlight, will thereafter in memory recall them as they appeared to him in the garish stare of the day? But for such enjoyment one must have company, and company of the dearest kind; unless, indeed, one is in the thrall of literary conception, poetic or otherwise. Else there is as much sadness as rapture in the show. It is the beauty of death to eyes that cannot in some definite manner turn its tender witchery to impersonal account. Indeed, here at Paestum, on a summer's night, it might well be a prologue to death itself. For malaria is abroad when the sun is down; and all wise men are then under roof. Better to be insensible of the romantic than to catch a fever in search of it.

They are kind to artists and architects in Neapolitan territory. The man who is either artist or architect has but to proclaim the fact, and he is free of the temples of Paestum. It is a sort of thank-offering for these glorious buildings. Even the meanest follower in the steps of these old Greeks has thus a share in their achievements; and it may be, that the

remission of the franc which ordinary people pay to enter the precincts has, ere now, stirred a spirit of proud emulation in the soul of this or that professional visitor—a spirit which, though the world, and perhaps even he himself, wots not of it, has got its spark in the vicinity of this work of the Sybarites ere a cloud fell upon their energies. This is a fair and reasonable fancy. It chimes in with the best aspirations of our nature. Reverence and respect are two states of being which by no means have a tendency to abase those who are disposed honourably to submit to them. On the contrary, the inability to venerate and esteem argues either a depraved or an anarchic mind; whereas, he who reveres or respects others for their achievements will not fail to strive that he also may, in the vigour of his prime, do works which shall win for him respect and esteem in his turn.

I returned to Naples in the evening, when the clouds had lifted from the Apennines, having spent their force upon the upper rocks. The sunset glow was upon the plain, its haycocks, and wigwags, and the crimson faces of the farm-buildings among the trees. There was song from the olives in the woods through which we rode; and song from the light-hearted peasants in the fields, and in the cars of the train. A worthy young Neapolitan, who was making his dinner by my side, offered me bread and onions, to eat with him. Rather than chill him with a refusal, I chose a small onion and a fragment of his bread, and made a pretence of feasting. He was a genial fellow, like the average Italian, whether of town or country. But, again like the typical Italian, he had no care for the suffering he caused to such living creatures as birds and beasts. He had a pocketful of unfledged hawks, luckless little misshapen things; and he was taking them home to his brothers and sisters, for their diversion. I dare say, ere it was night, the miserable little creatures were torn to pieces by the small barbarians. And perhaps nothing better could have happened to them, once they were in their captors' possession.

Here, truly, was an odd contrast to the sight of the temples of Pæstum. The temples excite veneration for their architects. And the young hawks were suffering retribution for the sins of their parents, who, for their depredations' sake, are loathed by the Italian rustic.

SOME OPERATIC REMINISCENCES.

THE following passage in a letter from Lord Byron to John Murray, dated from Ravenna, February sixteenth, 1821, and quoted in Moore's life of his brother poet, recalls to my memory one of the first Italian singers I ever heard.

"In the month of March," writes Byron, "will arrive from Barcelona Signor Curioni, engaged for the opera. He is an acquaintance of mine, and a gentlemanly young fellow, high in his profession. I must request your personal kindness and patronage in his favour. Pray introduce him to such of the theatrical people, editors of papers, and others, as may be useful to him in his profession, publicly and privately."

Whether this recommendation materially influenced Curioni's favourable reception or not, I am unable to say; but it is certain that the new tenor was at once accepted as a valuable acquisition, and remained for some years a fixture at the theatre in the Haymarket. "In person and countenance," says Manager Ebers, "he was one of the handsomest men who have ever appeared at the Italian Opera. As he continued on the stage his talents, by practice and cultivation, were constantly progressive, and proportionately estimated." As a proof of his increasing attraction, it may be stated that whereas in 1821 his salary amounted to six hundred pounds, it was raised two years later to nine hundred, and in 1827 to fourteen hundred and fifty pounds. It was in this latter year that I heard him as Jason in Simon Mayr's "Medea in Corinto," Pasta playing the heroine. Both artists were then in their prime; and although the lady's share of the season's receipts exceeded two thousand three hundred pounds, the worthy Mr. Ebers, contrary to his experience of former years, naively congratulated himself on having only been a loser to the tune of two thousand nine hundred and seventy-four pounds.

I was then far too young to appreciate the merits of the great prima donna; but the terror with which, in the closing scene of the opera, her impassioned outburst of rage and despair impressed me, is still painfully fresh in my memory. Twenty-three years later, in 1850, I heard her at the same theatre for the second and last time; she had arrived in London for the purpose of witnessing the début of her pupil, Parodi, and was persuaded to re-

appear before an English audience as Anna Bolena. It was an ill-advised step, the experiment, as might have been expected, proving a melancholy failure; vocally speaking, she was indeed a mere wreck, for although she still retained her grand declamatory style, she had lost all command over correct intonation, and her once glorious voice was little more than the "shadow of a shade."

My recollections of Malibran are limited to a single performance at Drury Lane in May, 1836, of the "Maid of Artois," an opera composed for her by Balfe in—if I have been correctly informed—little more than five weeks. Her voice had lost somewhat of its freshness, but nothing could surpass the brilliancy of her vocalisation, or the marvellous energy with which, although suffering from over-exertion, she threw herself heart and soul into the part of Isoline, and achieved a triumph hardly before equalled in her artistic career. In the following September I happened to be at Manchester, where she was engaged for the musical festival, and shall not easily forget the extraordinary effect produced throughout the city by the news of her death, after only a few days' illness. In public places, and in private circles, nothing else was talked of, and it seemed as if the entire population, many of whom could barely have known the great singer by name, were personally affected by the loss of as consummate an artist, and as highly gifted and thoroughly amiable a woman as ever lived.

I can just remember Malibran's most dangerous rival, Henriette Sontag, when she first appeared before a London audience in 1828 as Rosina in the "Barbiers." And a very charming Rosina she was: a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired blonde, with a true soprano voice of the full compass, and wonderfully flexible. From that time I lost sight of her until I heard of her return to the stage as Countess Rossi in 1848, when her reappearance in "Linda di Chamouni" was hailed with enthusiasm, and proved a valuable card to the generally unlucky Mr. Lumley. On the following afternoon I happened to call on a popular French actress then staying in London, and found there Mademoiselle Nau, a pleasing singer of the Paris Opera, who was then, if I remember rightly, fulfilling an engagement at the Princess's Theatre. Both ladies had been present at the performance of the previous evening, and Madame — was loud in her praise of the fascinating Linda.

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Nau, with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders, "succès de Comtesse, voilà tout!"

"Pardon, chère amie," retorted the more charitably-disposed actress, probably not sorry to inflict a well-merited "set down" on her pretentious visitor; "dites plutôt, succès qui compte!"

That bewitching siren, Giulia Grisi, and her scarcely less popular rival, Persiani, rarely sang in the same opera, except as Donna Anna and Zerlina in "Don Giovanni." Professionally speaking, they did not much interfere with each other; but, nevertheless, they seldom met without exchanging a few colloquial acerbities, in which species of guerilla warfare the lady "with a golden wire voice," as Fanny Kemble calls Persiani, who was by far the cleverer of the two, generally came off victorious. Lablache, greatly to his annoyance, was invariably appealed to by both belligerents to settle the dispute; and, on one occasion, when all his efforts to effect a reconciliation had proved unavailing, he threw up his hands in despair.

"Ah, mes enfants," pathetically remonstrated the good-natured "gros de Naples," "have you no compassion for an unfortunate basso, who has still the pretension of being a 'bel uomo'! If this state of things is to continue, and the remainder of my days are to be passed in patching up your squabbles, I shall soon be as thin as Fanny (Persiani), and unable to play Leporello without padding!"

It is a singular but incontrovertible fact that the great majority of tenors are bad actors. Why this should be is not easy to say; but examples are not wanting to demonstrate the correctness of the statement. Rubini, "facile princeps" as a singer, was certainly no exception to the rule; he did not even pretend to act, but contented himself with accompanying his dulcet notes by mechanically raising first his right arm and then his left, and letting them fall again. Gardoni was little better, and our own Templeton the worst of all. Even Mario, although he subsequently displayed considerable dramatic ability, especially as Raoul in the "Huguenots," was, in his early days, a deplorable "stick"; and the reason of this histrionic incapacity is not difficult to explain. If there is one thing which a Parisian audience insists upon in a singer as a "sine qua non," it is accuracy of pronunciation; their critical susceptibility must not be

offended by the slightest deviation from established rules, even the faintest suspicion of exotic accentuation being regarded as a barbarism. No wonder, then, that Mario, singing for the first time in a language unfamiliar to him, should have felt nervous under the ordeal, and have remarked to a friend who had reproached him for his want of animation:

"How can I be expected to enter into the spirit of my part when all I can possibly do is to keep my tongue from tripping?"

Incomparably the best actor, serious or comic, I ever saw on the operatic stage, was Giorgio Ronconi, who, in certain tragic parts, and notably as Chevreuse in "*Maria di Rohan*," reminded me forcibly of Edmund Kean. Physically, he was an insignificant-looking little man, but artistically a giant, who to my mind was never appreciated in London as highly as he deserved to be.

This, perhaps, was in a great measure owing to his being terribly handicapped by the absurd pretensions of his intolerably-conceited wife, who posed for a beauty and a first-rate singer, and was neither. Not only did she insist on being engaged at the same theatre with her husband, but also did all in her power to prevent him from singing with any lady artist but herself; and this continued until the public, weary of her false notes and caprices, peremptorily demanded her dismissal.

Tamburini—facetiously christened Tom Rubini by "Punch"—was undeniably a great, although far from a perfect, singer. His intonation was uncertain, and he had a tendency to sing flat, a defect which, during the whole of his career, he never entirely succeeded in mastering. His Don Giovanni could not be named in the same breath with that of Faure, and as a representative of the lively and bustling Figaro he was depressingly heavy; but in the "*Paritani*," and more particularly in the "*Sonnambula*," he was excellent.

At the risk of being accused of heresy, I must confess that I never could quite understand the extraordinary popularity of Jenny Lind. That she was a most gifted artist, possessing a sweet, powerful, and well-trained voice, it is impossible to deny; her appearance, moreover, had been judiciously heralded by a succession of preliminary puffs, which had so stimulated public curiosity, that people were prepared to accept her beforehand at the manager's

valuation, and to proclaim her—"de confiance"—superior to any other living singer. It must, however, be owned that her Alice in "*Robert le Diable*" was neither remarkable for impassioned tenderness nor for dramatic inspiration, as those who remember Mademoiselle Falcon in the character will certify; whereas in the "*Sonnambula*," and the "*Figlia del Regimento*," both parts exactly suited to her, she was simple, naïve, and in every respect charming. Her Norma was an admitted failure; the sole dissentient from the general verdict I remember meeting with being Macready, who, in the only conversation I ever had with him, strenuously maintained that she was right, and the critics wrong.

If, however, the innumerable partisans of the Swedish nightingale were to a certain extent justified in their admiration of her really sterling qualities, as much cannot be said of those—and they also were legion—who blindly succumbed to the fascinations of that strange compound of audacity and musical incompetency, Maria Piccolomini. As has been truly said of her, "She had not the faintest idea of what singing really was, and could no more accomplish a scale than she could move the Monument. Whenever she came in contact with a difficulty, she shook her little head, made a dash at it, and scrambled helter-skelter through it as she could." It is, however, but fair to add that she "never denied her incapacity, but honestly admitted the fact." A single performance of the "*Traviata*" had settled her pretensions in Paris, whereas in London she not only came, was seen, and conquered, but for two seasons drew more money into the treasury than any other member of the company. Her success, indeed, was an anomaly as inexplicable as the mysterious dish set before John Poole at a cheap restaurant in the Quartier Latin, the composition of which the humourist, after a minute inspection, declared to "pass all understanding."

When speaking of singers more remarkable for vocal than histrionic ability, I might have included in the list the admirable contralto, Marietta Alboni, who, whatever might be the personage represented by her, invariably adopted the same listless and unemotional manner, with a smile on her good-humoured face, and a placid indifference to any dramatic requirements of the part. She had a magnificent and finely-shaped head, but her figure had become so voluminous, that Leigh Hunt's

line, descriptive of Lady Blessington in mature age,

A grace after dinner, a Venus grown fat, might have been correctly applied to her. No words can do justice to the beauty of her voice, or to the exquisite perfection of her singing; those alone who have heard her can form any adequate idea of either.

In conclusion, a few words of recognition are due to one of the most remarkable artists and estimable women who have graced the lyric stage, Thérèse Tietjens, or, as she was commonly called, Titiens. Alike excellent as a singer and as an actress, she had attained by dint of hard study and incessant practice the highest rank in her profession, and remained modest and unassuming to the last. Far from being jealous of others, she never hesitated to sacrifice her own interest to that of the theatre; and a pleasing anecdote is recorded of her, with which I may appropriately close these memories of the past. A year or two before her death, the lessee of the theatre where she held the position of "prima donna" was in treaty with a well-known lady artist, who, among other conditions, insisted on appearing in certain parts belonging exclusively to Mademoiselle Titiens. "By all means let her have them," said the latter to the naturally embarrassed manager. "A little friendly rivalry will do me no harm; and if she succeeds, you, my dear friend, and the public will be the gainers!"

SOME SINGULAR PUNISHMENTS.

AN absolutely equitable adjustment between crime and punishment never has existed, and probably never will exist anywhere but in Utopia. The chief reason for this is, that the force of inherited tendency, the power of temptation, the bias imparted by education, training, and surroundings, being known only by Omniscience, the precise degree of an offender's guilt can never be ascertained by any fallible judge or jury. It is nevertheless much to be wished that jurists would arrive at some agreement as to what the real object and aim of punishment for crime really is. According to Sir Henry Maine, the two great instincts which lie at the root of all penal law are, firstly, the desire of the community to be avenged on the aggressor; and, secondly, the wish for a

punishment adequate to deter others from imitating him. But it has been contended that the community has no more right than the individual to execute vengeance on an offender, and that punishment has little or no deterrent effect upon others.

Some authorities hold that the reformation of the criminal should be the chief aim of punishment; others, of Carlyle's opinion, that a scoundrel remains for ever a scoundrel, hold that its true aim is the criminal's extinction. Mr. Justice Buller epigrammatically stated the deterrent theory when he said to a convicted thief: "Prisoner at the bar, you are not hung for stealing this horse, but that horses may not be stolen"; and the extinction theory was once stated from the Bench at the Gloucester Assizes by Baron Heath, when a witness stating that he came from Bitton, the Judge remarked: "You do seem to be of the Bitton breed; but I thought I had hanged the whole of that parish long ago."

The variability of human morality is curiously reflected in the penal laws of various ages and countries. In Holland, for instance, it was once a capital offence to kill a stork; and, in England, to cut down another man's cherry-tree. Idleness was punishable in Athens, but commendable in Sparta; and in Mexico, while a slanderer was only deprived of his ears or his lips, a drunken man or woman was stoned to death.

Plato and Aristotle commended infanticide as a valuable social custom, and Plutarch, Seneca, and other ancient moralists advocated suicide under certain given circumstances. Modern moralists condemn both practices without exception; and, according to English law, if two persons agree to commit suicide together, and only one of them succeeds, the survivor is liable to be tried and executed for murder.

In this country, before the Conquest, slaves suffered mutilation or death for very trifling offences; while the nobles could commit even murder and be quit of their offence for a fine to the Church and some paltry compensation to the family of the murdered man. At the present day it is our boast that we have one law for rich and poor alike, and that we do not mutilate nor, except in cases of murder, do we kill our criminals. On the contrary, we provide them with excellent sanitary dwellings and sufficient food, and endeavour to teach them useful trades, or, at any rate, give them plenty of laborious

work. Whether such treatment tends to the prevention of future crime, however, or to foster in the criminal a love of useful and honest work, is a problem on which opinions widely differ. It is now beginning to be suspected that there is very little relation between the severity of punishment inflicted and the amount of crime committed in any country; but from the earliest times until quite recently there appears to have been no doubt about the matter, and whenever a given punishment failed to repress a particular class of crime, the demand was always for more punishment.

Among our Saxon and Danish ancestors almost every punishment could be commuted for a money payment; but those offenders who were poor were very barbarously treated. They were branded and deprived of hands, and feet, and tongue, their eyes were plucked out, nose, ears, and upper lips were cut off, scalps were torn away, and sometimes the whole body was flayed alive. In the early part of the tenth century, a female slave who had committed theft was burnt alive, and a free woman was either thrown over a precipice, or drowned. A man slave was stoned to death by eighty other slaves, and when a female slave was burnt for stealing from any but her own lord, eighty other female slaves attended the execution, each bearing a log for the fire.

By Ethelbert's laws, not only did every man have his price, but every part of a man had its specified price. The wergild, or price of the corpse, of a ceorl was two hundred shillings; of a lesser thane, six hundred shillings; and of a royal thane, twelve hundred. It appears to have been a common practice for men, in those days, to settle their disputes by knocking one another's teeth out, and the law laid down a scale of compensation, according to which a front or a canine tooth cost six shillings, while a molar might be knocked out for one shilling, until Alfred was considerate enough to raise the price to fifteen. If a man could be satisfied with breaking an opponent's rib, he was only fined three shillings, but a broken thigh would cost him twelve; while, singularly enough, the loss of a beard was estimated at no less than twenty shillings. The last seems a very heavy penalty when it is remembered that a man might have knocked out his enemy's eye for a matter of a fifty-shilling fine.

William the Conqueror was averse to hanging, or otherwise killing criminals;

but it could hardly have been on humanitarian grounds, for he enacted that "their eyes be plucked out, or their hands chopped off, so that nothing may remain of the culprit but a living trunk, as a memorial of his crime."

Under Henry the First, coiners of false money were punished by the loss of their right hands, and other mutilations of various kinds were in common use. In 1160 we hear of heretics who had refused to abjure their faith being handed over by the Church to the civil authorities, to be branded with a hot iron on the forehead, have their clothes torn off from the waist up, and be whipped through the public streets. Boycotting was at that time a legal practice, whatever it may be now, for the said heretics were not only forbidden to worship as they desired, but forbidden to enter the houses of orthodox believers, or even to purchase the necessities of life.

The popular notion of the Crusaders, as an army of Bayards, "*sans peur et sans reproche*," is hardly consistent with the code of criminal law which Richard Cœur de Lion enacted for the especial behoof of those with whom he set out for Holy Palestine. If any one of them were convicted of theft, boiling pitch was to be poured over his head, then a pillow full of feathers shaken over him, and he was to be abandoned at the first port the vessel touched. Whoever killed another on board ship, was to be tied to the corpse and cast into the sea; whoever killed another on shore was to be tied to the corpse and buried with it. A blow was to be punished by three duckings in the sea, and the use of the knife in a quarrel caused the aggressor to lose one of his hands.

While the Lion-hearted was thus dealing with his warriors on the high seas, his brother John was behaving as unmercifully at home. The terrible ways in which he showed his displeasure may be instanced by the case of the Archdeacon of Norwich. For some slight offence he caused the poor churchman to be encased in a sheet of lead, which fitted round him like a cloak, and, after a lingering and painful death, became his coffin. In the reign of Edward the Third, a London tailor convicted of contempt of court was condemned to lose his right hand and be imprisoned in the Tower for life. The general severity of punishment, however, seems to have had no corresponding effect in suppressing crime. "When Henry the Seventh ascended the throne," says Mr. Pike, "a gibbet with a

robber hanging in chains, a petty thief in the pillory, a scold on a cucking-stool, or a murderer being drawn on a hurdle to the gallows, were spectacles as familiar to the Londoner of that day as a messenger from the telegraph-office is to us." Now and again one comes across the record of an arbitrary or obsolete punishment to which even the modern humanitarian may give a qualified approval. The fourteenth-century custom of punishing a London baker who gave short weight is an instance in point. The delinquent had a loaf of his own bread hung round his neck, and was exposed, to be pelted by his defrauded customers, in the pillory. For a third offence his oven would be pulled down, and he compelled to abjure trade in the City for ever.

Similarly, in a story of retaliatory punishment told by Sir Walter Scott, the natural man will find a pleasant spice of poetical justice. A poor widow, who had received some injury from the head of her clan, determined to walk from Ross to Edinburgh to see the King—James the First—and obtain redress. The cruel chief, hearing of her intention, had her brought before him, and, making the brutal jest that she would need to be well shod for her journey, nailed her shoes to her feet. Of course the poor woman's journey was long delayed; but eventually she did go to Edinburgh, and, when James heard the story of her wrongs, he sent for the chief and his accomplices, caused iron soles to be nailed to their feet, exposed them for some time to public derision, and then decapitated them.

In 1530, an attempt to poison the Bishop of Rochester and his family, by a cook, named Rose, who had thrown some deleterious drug into their porridge, created quite a panic in the land. Poisoning had hitherto been a rare crime in England, and was looked upon as a peculiarly horrible Italian crime. A new statute was accordingly passed to meet the new terror, and the penalty for the offence was boiling to death, without benefit of clergy. Rose was publicly boiled to death in Smithfield.

The story of the fires of Smithfield is too familiar to need more than a passing reference. Henry the Fourth appears to have been the first to burn heretics. In the reign of Edward the First, incendiaries suffered a kind of "lex talionis," in being burnt to death. Burning for witchcraft was legal until the passing of 9 Geo. II. c. 5. Women could be burnt alive for treason at the time Blackstone wrote his

Commentaries; and the ancient law of the Druids, which made the murder of a husband a sort of petit treason, was still in force in 1784, when a woman, who had murdered her husband, was condemned "to be drawn on an hurdle to the place of execution and burned with fire until she be dead."

During the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," any poor wretch adjudged to be a vagabond, if above the age of fourteen years, was grievously whipped and "burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch." According to Holinshed's "Chronicle," rogues were great annoyers of the commonwealth in the time of the virgin Queen; and, although King Henry the Eighth "did hang up three score and twelve thousand of them in his time," yet since his death the number of them greatly increased, "notwithstanding that they are trussed up apace." "For there is not one year commonly wherein three hundred or four hundred of them are not devoured and eaten up by the gallows in one place and another."

Harrison, in his "Description of England" (1577), says that "torment with us is greatly abhorred;" but he relates how, "such felons as stand mute, and speak not at their arraignment, are pressed to death by huge weights laid upon a board, that lieth over their breast, and a sharp stone under their backs."

And he forgets to mention that those two frightful engines of torture—the rack and the "Scavenger's daughter"—were occasionally put in use. The rack, as is well known, stretched its victim until his fingers might be torn from his hands, and his toes from his feet. The less familiar "Scavenger's daughter" was contrived, with diabolical ingenuity, to act in the reverse way, compressing the wretched culprit so that his legs were forced into his thighs, these into his body, and his head into his shoulders, until his shape was almost that of a ball.

Harrison reports a strange manner of execution in use at Halifax, where offenders were beheaded on market days by an engine somewhat like the modern guillotine. The knife fell on the pulling of a rope; and, if the culprit were convicted of cattle stealing, "the self beast or other of the same kind shall have the end of the rope tied somewhere unto them, so that they, being driven, do draw out the pin, whereby the offender is executed."

For certain offences, the same authority relates that both men and women are dragged over the Thames between Lambeth and Westminster at the tail of a boat; and, "as I have heard reported," he says, "such as have walls and banks near unto the sea, and do suffer the same to decay—after convenient admonition—whereby the water entereth and drowneth up the country, are, by a certain ancient custom, apprehended, condemned, and staked in the breach, where they remain for ever as a parcel of the foundation of the new wall that is to be made upon them."

Another class of persons who are nowadays popular and prosperous would have come off badly in the days of good Queen Bess. Conjuring, and the use of the divining-rod, were capital offences. In 1580, on "the eight-and-twentieth day of November, were arraigned, in the Queen's Bench, William Randall, for conjuring to know where treasure was hid in the earth, and goods feloniously taken, were become." Several other persons were also arraigned for aiding and abetting the said Randall, and they were all found guilty and condemned to death, though only Randall was executed.

The stocks, the cucking-stool, the brank, and the pillory, painful as they were in themselves, were all supplemented by the brutality of the populace. Cucking-stools were of two kinds: one consisted merely of a strong chair, into which the offender was securely fastened, and then exposed either at his or her own door, or in some public situation, such as the town gates, or market-place; the other consisted of a chair affixed to the end of a plank, and balanced on a beam, and was used for ducking scolding wives in the nearest pond or stream. As late as 1745, we find it stated in the "London Evening Post" that, "Last week a woman, who keeps the 'Queen's Head' alehouse at Kingston, in Surrey, was ordered by the Court to be ducked for scolding, and was accordingly placed in the chair and ducked in the river Thames, under Kingston Bridge, in the presence of 2000 to 3000 people." According to Mr. William Andrews' monograph on the subject, the cucking-stool was rarely used in the eighteenth century, although within living memory—in 1817—a woman was wheeled round in the chair, and only escaped ducking because the water was too low.

From the same authority we learn that punishment by the brank, or scold's bridle,

although frequently resorted to, was never sanctioned by law. This instrument was made in various forms, and consisted of an iron head-piece, fastening by a padlock, and attached to a chain, and was so contrived that an iron plate, in some instances garnished with sharp spikes, effectually silenced the tongue of the person upon whom it was placed, who was then led by an officer through the streets of the town. The brank appears to have come into use about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and there is a specimen preserved at Congleton, which was used on a woman for abusing the churchwardens and constables of that town, as recently as 1824.

The pillory was constantly in use for various offences until the beginning of the present century, and could be applied to perjurers up to the time of Her Majesty's accession to the throne in 1837, in which year it was finally abolished. In earlier days its own proper torments were considered by the judges to be insufficient. For instance, Timothy Penredd, who, in 1570, had forged the seal of the Court of Queen's Bench, was put in the pillory in Cheapside on two successive market days. On the first day one of his ears was nailed to the post, so that he should be compelled, "by his own proper motion," to tear it away; and on the second day the other ear was similarly dealt with. Sometimes it was the populace who considered the punishment insufficient, and in such cases they did not fail to act according to their convictions. In 1756, two thief-takers, who were exposed in Smithfield for perjury, were so roughly used by the drovers, that one of them died of the injuries he received.

Voluntary intention has been generally held to be a necessary attribute of criminal action; but the rule has not been universal. In Athens an involuntary murderer was banished until he gave satisfaction to the relatives of the deceased; and in China accidental arson is now punished by a certain number of bamboo strokes, and more or less prolonged banishment.

In the Middle Ages the lower animals were frequently tried, convicted, and punished for various offences. Mr. Baring Gould has collected some curious cases of this kind. In 1266 a pig was burnt at Fontenay aux Roses, near Paris, for having eaten a child. In 1386 a judge at Falaise condemned a sow to be mutilated and hanged for a similar offence. Three years later a horse was solemnly tried before the

magistrate, and condemned to death for having killed a man. During the fourteenth century oxen and cows might be legally killed whenever taken in the act of marauding; and asses for a first offence had one ear cropped, for a second offence the other ear, and if after this they were asses enough to commit a third offence, their lives became forfeit to the Crown. "Criminal" animals frequently expiated their offences, like other malefactors, on the gallows; but subsequently they were summarily killed without trial, and their owners mulcted in heavy damages.

In the fifteenth century it was popularly believed that cocks were intimately associated with witches; and they were sometimes credited with the power of laying accursed eggs, from which sprang winged serpents. In 1474, at Bâle, a cock was publicly accused of having laid one of these dreadful eggs. He was tried, sentenced to death, and, together with his egg, was burned by the executioner in the market-place amid a great concourse of people.

In 1694, during the witch persecutions in New England, a dog exhibited such strange symptoms of affliction, that he was believed to have been ridden by a warlock, and he was accordingly hanged. Snails, flies, mice, ants, caterpillars, and other obnoxious creatures have been similarly proceeded against and condemned to various punishments—mostly in ecclesiastical courts. And, stranger still, inanimate objects have suffered the same fate.

In 1685, when the Protestant Chapel at Rochelle was condemned to be demolished, the bell thereof was publicly whipped for having assisted heretics with its tongue. After being whipped, it was catechised, compelled to recant, and then baptized and hung up in a Roman Catholic place of worship. Probably similar absurdities may have been perpetrated in our own country; for it must be remembered that only in the present reign was the law repealed which made a cart-wheel, a tree, or a beast which had killed a man, forfeit to the State for the benefit of the poor.

It has been said that punishment is not likely to be efficacious unless it swiftly follows the offence. This was improved on by a Barbary Turk who, whenever he bought a fresh Christian slave, had him hung up by the heels and bastinadoed, on the principle, it is to be supposed—though the application is decidedly sin-

gular—that prevention is better than cure. Periander of Corinth, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, seems to have been much of the same mind, for one of his recorded sayings is: "Punish not only those who have done wrong, but those who are going to." A similar philosophy is embodied in our nursery rhyme:

That's Jack. Lay a stick on his back.

What's he done? I cannot say.

We'll find out to-morrow, and beat him to-day.

But, probably, this system of treatment would never be reconciled with the popular idea of justice in any community. Sir William Blackstone and others, however, have propounded a theory of punishment which is hardly less ridiculous, namely, that those offences should be most heavily punished which "a man has the most frequent and easy opportunities of committing, which cannot be so easily guarded against as others, and which, therefore, the offender has the strongest inducement to commit." Blackstone's own illustrations are sufficient to show the absurdity of his theory, for, as he says, it is on this principle that, while stealing a load of corn from an open field is only punishable with transportation, stealing a handkerchief, or other trifle, above the value of twelvepence, privately from one's person, is made punishable with death. Presumably, the old Chief Justice would have applauded that judge who, some few years ago, at the Middlesex Sessions, sentenced a man to seven years' penal servitude for stealing three-halfpence, and a woman to five years for stealing two pieces of meat from a butcher's shop.

A system of vindictive and excessive punishment will generally defeat its own ends, because, as was at last the case when the death penalty was inflicted for sheep-stealing and petty theft from the person, juries will refuse to convict. There is something to be said for the Chinese system, according to which, every imaginable offence has its own strictly-defined penalty. At any rate, the large discretionary power which is left to the judge in our system sometimes leads to very curious and unedifying results; and there is no doubt that whatever utility there may be in legal punishments depends less on their severity, or even on their justice, than it does on a popular recognition of their justice, and a certainty that they will inevitably follow on conviction.

NAZARETH HOUSE.

BETWEEN Kensington and Hammer-smith, on the highway once known as the Bath Road, but which has long lost sight of any such distant destination, and tranquilly accepted its more modest function of taking people to Turnham Green or Brentford, there stands a tall, extensive red-brick building, the many gables of which peer over the long, blank wall that borders the footway. Not that the wall is altogether blank, for there is a carriage-way closed by great black gates, and further on appears an arched doorway, with a massive door, a little grated wicket, and a box for the alms of such wayfarers as may be able to spare a coin for the aged and helpless—for such are the bulk of the inmates of Nazareth House.

Any one passing that way last winter, when the cold was so severe, and when the unemployed were so numerous, might have noticed, on any morning of the week, a crowd of hungry-looking men, in their working clothes of every shade of grey and rusty drab, waiting patiently at the gate of Nazareth House. The size of the crowd formed a good gauge of the severity of the prevailing distress. With frost and snow, the poor half-starved people gathered there in considerable numbers and from a radius of many miles. As spring approached, and work became more abundant, the gathering dwindled and became less and less, till at last it disappeared altogether. But all through that cold and miserable season, food was provided for all who came to ask for it. It is difficult to see how the good Sisters managed all this, seeing that the whole establishment is virtually dependent on the day by day labours of the energetic Sisterhood in collecting contributions of all kinds from every possible, and even apparently impossible, source.

It is the sight of the carriage entrance to Nazareth House that suggests all this; although, perhaps, it would be more in accordance with facts to call it the cart entrance, for the carriage of the Sisters of Nazareth is of a very unpretending character, resembling, more than anything else, a railway parcels' van, but for the black robes and white coif of the Sister in charge, which somehow establish a different impression. But the carriage from Nazareth House is familiar enough all over London—city, town, and suburb. Indeed,

wherever there is spoil to be gathered for the poor and suffering, there the Sisters, with a quiet, marvellous instinct, are sure to find their way; and if the sight of the Nazareth House van, on its daily round, or of the Sisters in their quaint religious garb, canvassing in pairs one busy neighbourhood after another, and succeeding best, perhaps, in the busiest and most business-like; if all this outward view of the Nazareth Sisterhood and their daily work excites an interest in the institution itself and a desire to know what goes on within its walls, why, then, a visitor need only present himself, or herself—between the hours of two and four p.m.—at the little wicket under the archway, and ring the big bell, and the big door will creak upon its hinges, and Nazareth House will lie open to the interested visitor.

If one has a preconceived idea of a certain air of gloom and mystery as necessarily connected with a conventual building, a visit to Nazareth House will agreeably remove that impression. The young Sister who acts as gatekeeper is as cheerful and blithe as can be. The open corridors resound with the tread of footsteps, and with the voices, positively merry voices, and laughter of children. Did one expect to have to record how, in the words of the Jacobite ballad,

The auld auld men cam' out and wept,
he would find that he had quite a different story to tell, and that the brisk old gentlemen who bustle in and out, quite full, perhaps, of some important mission to the outer world, or those who sit, and read, and smoke over the fire—for the good Sisters are tolerant of masculine weakness in the matter of tobacco—or those who, most infirm and feeble of all, can hardly stir from their beds in the infirmary ward, are as cheerful and contented as age and infirmity will allow. And yet the youngest of the party has passed the allotted age of three-score and ten, and none of them lack the one essential qualification for entrance into this charitable home, that is, utter and absolute want and destitution. Not that the inmates of Nazareth House are taken from the lowest social stage. Most of them are people who have seen better days; some have even been in possession of wealth and social importance, but, such are the sad vicissitudes of life, have come to utter ruin and beggary till they have found an asylum here. And there are cases where those who, out of their abundance, had once freely given to the Sisters

for their poor, have since come to be dependent on the same kindly hands.

And the old ladies, too—they look snug, and warm, and comfortable, gathered about the fire in their lofty, airy chambers, with their bits of work in their hands, or something in the way of knitting or embroidery. And all these old ladies have their own individual characteristics carefully preserved—their own bonnets and shawls, and cheerful little bits of finery. There is no uniform adopted at Nazareth House, except the religious garb of the ministering Sisters, nor anything to distinguish its inmates from any of the decent old bodies you may meet shopping or marketing in the world outside. And it is the same with the old men—all are decently dressed in the garb of every-day life. And yet they are all clothed from top to toe, neatly and appropriately clothed, from the old garments which the Sisters collect on their daily rounds, or which are sent in parcels by kind-hearted people; and any number of such parcels may be despatched to Nazareth House without fear of causing a glut in the second-hand clothes department. Children's clothing, too. We shall come to the children presently; but people who have growing girls should bear in mind that what is too small for their little lassies, will be sure to fit some of the tiny little bodies at Nazareth House.

The work of Nazareth House began some forty years ago, when the Sisterhood was established with the purpose of tending the infirm and aged poor, and of taking charge of helpless and orphan children—girls, at least. "We don't feel equal to the charge of boys," says the bright-eyed, intelligent Sister who acts as guide. Beginning in a small way with about seventy inmates, the Sisters, as a result of their daily, pious mendicancy, have to show this great block of fine buildings with about five hundred inmates, all poor and mostly helpless, and depending not only for daily bread, but for those hundred offices of care and affection which their helpless state requires, upon the devoted band of Sisters.

Perhaps this century of ours is a little wanting in sympathy for the troubles and infirmities of advancing years. We endow and support innumerable institutions for boys. The feeling is, no doubt, that it "pays" to bring up youth to habits of discipline and industry; but that there is a want of "results" in looking after the aged and incapable. Other ages have handed down to us fine endowments in

the way of hospitals and alma-houses, intended for the shelter of declining years; and we have generally been satisfied with taking all we could for other purposes, and leaving the poor brothers and sisters in the cold. But these Sisters of Nazareth teach us a higher lesson.

So it is pleasant to see the rows of bright coverlids; the rooms still gay with Christmas decorations; the gossips over the fire; and the grey heads bowed over the trembling hands. There is an underlying pathos and sadness, too, in the sight of the old, old heads that are lying so placidly on the pillows, soon to be garnered by the great reaper Death; and yet there is thankfulness for an end so peaceful and calm, and attended by such gentle ministering kindness. There is the chapel, too, with its dim, religious light, where all day long some may be found in silent prayer. Yet although the institution, as everybody knows, is Roman Catholic, there is no limitation of its benefits on account of religious opinions. Old people are taken care of without any distinction of creed; and those who like to attend places of worship outside can do so whenever they please. Indeed, some of the best friends of the Sisterhood have been Protestants. And in the little parlour where visitors are received, beneath the portrait of the venerable Cardinal-Archbishop, hangs that of an active, wealthy man of business, who, without any sympathy with the religious faith of the Sisters, was so attracted by the practical beneficence of their work, that he became one of their warmest supporters and most generous benefactors.

As we follow our black-robed guide through wards and corridors, faces everywhere brighten as she passes. And now we are in the children's room, where the little flock clusters about the Sister's knees bright and fearless, and in pretty frocks and garments of various hues, all adapted by the skilful needles of the Sisterhood, from the cast-off garments of richer and more distinguished, but, perhaps, not happier nurseries. For here are toys of every kind, and treasured Christmas gifts, which the children offer to be admired by the casual visitor, in the fullest confidence in his sympathetic interest. And so, with a pat on the cheek for one, and a pleasant smile for another, the Sister glides on, and now we are among the poor little invalids, some helpless and crippled from their birth; others with faces only dimly lighted by the ray of intelligence,

and yet surrounded by a cheerful, tender solicitude that robs the scene of its sadness. Then there is the schoolroom where the elder children are already seated at their desks, awaiting the beginning of the class hour. And here the girls receive a sound elementary education. And their training is directed throughout so as to fit them for that destination which the Sisters feel is most thoroughly within their grasp, that is, for domestic service. They learn to sweep and to scrub, to sew and to cook, the bright little house-servants of the future, whose lot in life is assured, with moderate well-doing on their own parts. And to those who leave the house and enter upon the great world of service, there is always a home to return to, and in sickness or trouble a hand stretched out to help them.

Passing out into the open quadrangle it is pleasant to meet the soft winter sunshine, which seems to rest upon the place with quite exceptional warmth. "We always have our full share of sunshine, whenever the sun is to be seen," remarks the Sister, cheerfully, "and yonder are the open grounds where the children play, and the old people sun themselves, when the weather is propitious." And beyond is a wide, open region dimly showing in the broken sunlight, with tall new houses here and there, and suggestions of orchards and market-gardens, which stretch away to the broad river, the presence of which is only manifested by a touch of watery radiance in the cloudy haze.

And now, what is the secret of this wondrous alchemy that has secured such great results out of the dross and refuse of the pomp and luxury of the world, the crumbs from the table of Dives, the odds and ends of houses great and small; out of cast-off clothing and shreds and remnants from warehouses and shops, together with the daily alms of the charitable, and the occasional benefactions of the liberal-minded? Day by day arise the needs of this great helpless family, day by day they are supplied; but what a stress of care and anxiety must rest, one would think, upon the shoulders of those—a band of feeble women—on whose efforts, humanly speaking, everything depends. But there is an air of cheerful confidence about the Sisters. As the need arises so comes the help—often from unexpected sources, and through unknown hands. But there is always need of fresh help, of new sources of supply. And all

who have respect for grey hairs, and would see them sheltered from the storms of the world, or for helpless childhood, orphaned and forlorn, but gathered and rescued from want and misery, and trained for a useful and honourable career, all such should count themselves as supporters of Nazareth House.

THE STORY OF DORIS CAIRNES.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "*Count Paolo's Ring*," "*All Hallow's Eve*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.

THREE years had passed since Paul Beaumont had vowed an eternal friendship and said a long farewell to Doris Cairnes; and those years, which brought so many changes and so much joy and sorrow to many people, which separated friends and united lovers, and brought wealth and rejoicing to some, and poverty and heart-aches to others, brought very few changes to the Red House and its inhabitants. Miss Mordaunt had grown a little greyer and older, and also a little more grasping and avaricious, and old Margot the servant gruffer and feebler, and the Red House itself gloomier and shabbier than ever; but still the three women lived their separate lives, and the days flowed on in the old monotonous, uneventful way. There was no change, only that Doris grew taller, and fairer, and more stately, and—so Laurence declared every time he came to Chesham—bloomed among her gloomy surroundings like a tall white lily among a wilderness of briars and nettles!

There were few changes, too, at the Hall. Floss, much to her disgust, had been transferred from the nursery to the schoolroom, and from the care of her old nurse to that of a French governess, whom she detested with all her warm little heart. Sir John looked older, and a little harassed and worried, more on account, so it was whispered in the village, of my lady's extravagance, than the "bad times" at which he, like the rest of his country friends, was constantly grumbling. He and Floss were often alone at the Hall, for Lady Cecil had declared Chesham to grow more and more unendurable with the passing years, and spent most of her time either in London, or in visiting her friends. At all events, she was very rarely at the Hall; and if it had not been

for the constant change of toilettes which these visits required, and the long dress-maker's and milliner's bills which continually arrived to bother poor Sir John, neither husband nor child would have grieved at her absence.

Doris thought her looking old and changed when once, during one of her short "visits" to the Hall, they met face to face in the lane. Doris in her old blue gown, with the autumn sunshine streaming on her fair face and on the crown of chestnut plaits which wreathed her head, with her arms full of poppies and marguerites and bramble leaves, just reddened by the first touch of autumn's fingers; Lady Cecil perfectly dressed, languidly graceful as ever, but with the lines of disappointment and discontent a little more apparent than before in her beautiful face, an eager, unsatisfied longing in her blue eyes.

The two women would willingly have avoided each other had that been possible; but it was not, for the road was narrow and winding, and they were face to face before either knew of the other's proximity. Both hesitated, both coloured, and Doris, with a little proud inclination of her head, would have passed; but Lady Cecil stopped, and held out her hand.

"It is Doris Cairnes, surely," she said.

"Have you forgotten me?"

"No, Lady Cecil."

Doris took the offered hand rather coldly. Instinct told her then, as it had told her years ago, that Lady Cecil disliked and despised her; and it went sorely against the grain for Doris, who was honest to the heart's core, to assume a cordiality which she did not feel.

"No, I have not forgotten you," she said, quietly.

"You might very well! I have grown old and ugly since I last saw you. Let me see, it is three years ago, is it not?" my lady went on; and all the time that she spoke her eyes were watching Doris's face with a critical, searching gaze. The girl felt herself blushing crimson under it.

"Yes, three," she answered.

"I thought so. It was the last summer I spent entirely at the Hall; the summer Paul Beaumont was so much with us," Lady Cecil continued. "By the way, do you ever hear from or of him, child? He seems to have quite disappeared of late!"

So this was the reason of my lady's unwonted affability, Doris thought, shrewdly. She was anxious about Paul

Beaumont's movements. Well, she would get very little information from her—Doris. She had not seen him since their farewell interview in the garden of the Red House; but all the same, he had not forgotten her. Every Christmas brought her some remembrance. Once a desk fitted up with everything in the way of writing materials that a desk could contain: Note-paper and envelopes enough to last a lifetime, Doris thought; dainty pen-holders; a wonderful knife; and, among other things, and which was most welcome to Doris just then, a book full of postage-stamps. Then another year came a work-basket, more beautiful and complete than the desk; and on the last Christmas Day a dressing-case with gold-topped bottles and ivory-backed brushes, such as Doris had once seen on Lady Cecil's dressing-table, but had never dreamed it possible for her to possess. And with each gift came a little note, asking her acceptance of it from her friend Paul Beaumont.

Doris had written a grateful reply to each note, and had, perhaps, secretly hoped that Paul might write again; but he had not done so. This was all she knew of him, and as it was not likely that she would tell Lady Cecil this, she shook her head and answered simply:

"I have heard nothing of him for a long time, Lady Cecil. Do you not see each other now?"

"Very rarely. Paul has turned philanthropist, I hear," and Lady Cecil laughed. There was an irritated note in the laugh, Doris thought. "He spends most of his time at Oaklands, his place in Devonshire. The estate was in a very neglected condition when he came into it, and he is draining and building model cottages, and, in fact, assuming the rôle of beneficent country Squire. He is going into Parliament, they say, shortly; so, probably, next season, I may see more of him."

"Is there any talk of his marriage?"

Doris asked.

"His marriage? Oh dear, no! Paul will never marry."

Lady Cecil's face softened a little; her eyes grew bluer and softer.

"I dare say you have heard that ages ago he and I were lovers, and that I treated him badly? Have you not heard, eh?"

"Something of the kind—yes."

"Well, he is very constant, my poor Paul; and he has never forgotten. He has often told me that no other woman could take my place with him; and,

though I don't generally put much faith in a man's constancy, I believe he has kept his word."

Lady Cecil looked sharply at Doris as she spoke. She had been terribly jealous of her once. She had always connected her with Paul's sudden departure from the Hall, three years before. Paul had never mentioned Doris's name, and of that interview in the garden she was quite ignorant; but still there was a mystery surrounding his sudden departure, and grave, dejected manner, which she had long and vainly wished to solve. So now, as she spoke, she looked sharply at Doris; but the girl only smiled gravely.

"I should not have thought Mr. Beaumont a likely man to eternally wear the willow-bough," she said, carelessly.

There was a little satire in her voice and smile that annoyed Lady Cecil.

"Ah, you do not know him," she said, sharply. "By the way, how is that protégé of his, Laurence Ainslie, getting on? Is he turning out the genius Paul predicted, or only a failure, like so many youthful geniuses?"

"Not a failure, certainly," Doris answered, proudly.

A failure! Laurence, whose last picture had been hung so well at the Academy exhibition, and had gained glowing encomiums from the critics, all of whom had predicted a splendid career for the young artist. A failure! Doris, remembering the papers he had sent to her, which contained those flattering notices, could have laughed outright at the question.

"Certainly not a failure," she repeated, proudly.

"And are you two as good friends as ever, or has he forgotten you?" Lady Cecil went on, with her cold smile.

Doris flushed vividly.

"Quite as good friends," she answered, briefly.

"What, he has not fallen in love with some pretty model yet? Truly, he must be a rara avis! But take my advice, Doris; don't put too much faith in him, or any other man. We women are fickle and inconstant enough, Heaven knows! but men are fifty times worse. Out of sight means out of mind with them," Lady Cecil laughed; and then she gave Doris a careless nod and smile, and moved away down the lane.

She paused, however, before she had gone very far, and looked back.

"When are you coming to see me, Doris?" she asked, graciously. "I hear that you are a frequent visitor at the Hall when Floss and Sir John are alone. Come soon, child," and, without waiting for an answer, she smiled again and turned away.

Doris gazed after her with a look that almost amounted to pity in her clear eyes. Lady Cecil, beautiful, rich, and charming, did not appear a fit object on which to bestow pity, but yet Doris felt vaguely that she was not a happy woman; that the shadow of discontent which darkened her face was but the outward reflection of the discontent and disappointment which filled her mind. She had everything, apparently, that life could give, but she was not satisfied; there was just one little thing which she craved, which had once been hers, which was lost to her for ever now. Doris, in her shabby dress, sauntering slowly up the lane back to her dull home, and the uncongenial companions who awaited her there, was, after all, the happier of the two, and the most to be envied.

Miss Mordaunt, looking slowly up from her account-books, over which as usual she was poring as Doris entered, thought almost for the first time how pretty, and how like her dead mother the girl was growing.

"There is a letter for you, Doris," she said. "That is the second this week. I think it would be much better if Laurence Ainslie would save his money instead of wasting it on so many stamps and envelopes. But he was always an idle, extravagant boy—just like his father."

Doris did not answer. She took up the letter and put it in her pocket. She had not time to read it just then, for the poultry had to be gathered in, and fastened up safely for the night; and there was the porridge, which formed the usual evening meal, to prepare; and not until all this was done could Doris find time to read her letter.

She went into the kitchen, which was the most cheerful room in the house; it was empty, and Doris drew up a chair to the hearth, and stirred the fire into a blaze, and took out her letter.

Laurence had never written twice in the same week before; probably he had something important to tell her, Doris thought; perhaps he might be coming to Chesham for a few days' rest and holiday. He had hinted at some such intention in his last letter.

And so she opened the letter and read it by the flickering firelight, and the colour flushed into her cheeks, and her sweet eyes grew strangely brilliant, and her face brightened into absolute beauty as she read. And this was what Laurence said :

"I have good news for you, dearest Doris. I have sold another picture for three hundred pounds, and have received a commission to paint a companion to it. Isn't that splendid? Mr. Redmont is almost as pleased as I am, and as you will be when you read this. I should very much like you to see the picture, Doris, before it goes to its new owner; but that is impossible, so I will bring the study with me when I come to Chesham, and it will give you some idea of what the picture is. I called it 'An Old Garden'; and it is, I think, a very faithful representation of that bit of the Red House garden where we used to sit in the old days and talk of the future. Do you remember, dear? I have painted the apple-tree, and the grey-stone wall, where the peaches grow, and the tall hollyhocks and box-hedge; and under the apple-tree you are sitting, Doris, in your old blue gown, and the sunset light is falling on your chestnut head. It is a little bent. Your hands are clasped on your knee; there is the wistful look in your eyes I remember so well. But you shall see the study when I come, dear; that will be, I think, next Thursday." Doris gave a little gasp of delight as she read the last sentence. "I shall only be able to stay one night, for I am anxious to begin my new picture; but I want to see you particularly, Doris. I have something very near to my heart which I want to tell you, and which I do not care to write. I did not mean to speak of it just yet, but my late success, and the prospect of greater success still, justifies me in doing so. I wonder if you can guess what I mean, old friend? Ah, Paul Beaumont was right when he told me years ago how good a thing it was for a man to have a friend like you. I feel the truth of his words more and more every day of my life. Half—nay, more than half of my success I owe to you, Doris."

Did ever words sound half so sweet in any girl's ears before as those words which Laurence had written out of the fulness of his grateful heart sounded in Doris's? Was ever girl as happy before as Doris that evening as she sat by the fire, with the precious letter clasped in her hands, and her happy eyes watching the flickering

flame as it rose and fell, and flashed on the rows of shining tins which hung upon the opposite wall.

"Remember, we will always belong to each other, you and I, Doris," Laurence had said; and "Always," Doris had answered, solemnly, and they had sealed the compact with a kiss.

Three years! They had seemed very long sometimes to Doris, patient though she was. But they were over now, and Laurence, crowned with the success she had helped to win, was coming back to her to lay his laurels at her feet, to bid her share his triumph.

It was not often that Doris bestowed much time or care upon her toilette; but she was very anxious to look her best for Laurence; and so, on the Thursday afternoon, she brushed out her long chestnut hair, and twisted it in shining coils round her head; and instead of the old blue gown, which was scarcely wearable now, she put on the only white frock which she possessed, and which she kept for gala occasions. It had belonged to her mother, and was sadly old-fashioned; but yet there was something quaint and becoming in the long, straight skirt with the one little frill at the bottom, and the bodice cut a little open at the neck, and finished off with a ruffle of yellowish lace; and when Doris had gathered a cluster of late crimson roses, which were still blooming in a sheltered corner, and fastened them in her belt, and looked at herself in the glass, she felt, with a little thrill of pardonable vanity, that, at all events, Laurence would not think she had grown uglier during his absence; nay, that she had even grown rather pretty than otherwise!

He had promised to meet her in their old trysting-place under the apple-tree soon after five. It was just five minutes to the hour when Doris reached it. The afternoon was bright, and unusually hot for October; and the garden, as well as Doris, had put on its fairest looks to welcome Laurence. The summer flowers were almost over, but the tall hollyhocks and dahlias were still in bloom; the winter pears hung in red and brown clusters on the wall, and though the leaves were changing rapidly, they were so beautiful in their varied shades of crimson and amber, that it was impossible to regret their vanished verdura. Doris, standing under the apple-tree on the carpet of yellow leaves with which the ground was covered, looked strangely young and fair in contrast

with the matured autumnal beauty of her surroundings. All around her spoke of autumn, of a vanished summer, of the winter that was coming; but Doris herself, in her fresh beauty, with her smiling eyes and flushed cheeks, might have stood as a type of spring!

Laurence thought so as he noiselessly opened the garden-door, and, pausing a moment, looked in on the strange yet familiar scene. How often, during his three years of absence, that garden had been in his thoughts! How often he had pictured Doris there, bending over her flowers, or gathering her fruit for market; and now once more he was there, and Doris—only a fairer, statelier Doris than the pretty rustic maiden of his thoughts—was waiting under the apple-tree to welcome him!

He went up to her softly, and put his hand on her arm; and she started, and turned and faced him with a swift rush of colour to her cheeks, a strange brilliancy in her grey eyes, that told him, even before she had time to speak, how welcome he was to her.

"Why, Doris, how pretty you have grown!" he said; and then, in his old, boyish fashion, he put his hands on her shoulders, and bent his head and kissed her.

The hour that followed—that happy hour, when they sat side by side, and hand in hand on the fallen tree, and talked of all that had happened since last they had met, and of the old days, which seemed so far off to Laurence now—was full of a perfect happiness and content to Doris. She often told herself afterwards that it was the happiest hour of her life; there was absolutely nothing, no disturbing thoughts of past or future to mar its completeness! She was quite happy; perfectly satisfied; for was not her probation, and the long years of waiting and separation over at last, and Laurence, her boy-lover, her hero, who had promised to be true to her for ever and ever, with her again—unchanged, unaltered!

It is doubtful, however, whether Laurence himself was quite as well satisfied. As they spoke of the past days, and especially recalled the day when they had parted, a strange feeling, which was partly remorse and partly dissatisfaction, stole over him. Words which he had almost forgotten until now came back to him; the remembrance of a boyish promise, which had long since almost passed from his

mind, awoke again and disturbed his peace.

"Doris, remember, we must always belong to each other—you and I," he had said; and "Always," Doris had answered. He had forgotten that promise until now, and he was conscious that he had signally failed to keep it; and there rose up before him a fair, laughing face, with sunny blue eyes, and waving, yellow hair, and red, smiling lips, and it blotted out the sweet face, and grey-blue eyes that were looking into his own with such sweet contentment. Did Doris still remember that promise, he wondered, or had she forgotten it, too?

But if the doubt haunted him and disturbed his peace, Doris was quite unconscious of it. She saw a change in him. It was not her boy-lover who had come back to her, but an older and more manly Laurence; but since the change was for the better, she could not regret it. And so she sat with her hands in his, and talked to him, and asked a hundred questions about his work and his friends, and listened eagerly as he spoke to her of the busy life he led in the great city of which she had often dreamed, and so often longed to see, and was quite happy.

And yet all the time, as they laughed and talked, there was one subject uppermost in both their minds. "What will she say? How will she take it?" Laurence was thinking. And "When will he tell me?" thought happy Doris.

Laurence knew the subject must be broached speedily. He was inclined naturally to postpone the evil day of facing a difficulty as long as possible, but he knew that on this occasion it was impossible to do so. Every moment he expected Doris to ask him what the matter was of which he had spoken in his letter, which was so near to his heart, and which he had come to Chesham on purpose to tell her. Every moment it grew more difficult to begin it. He took a desperate plunge at last.

"Doris," he began, hurriedly, "I said in my letter that I had something important to tell you. Didn't you wonder? Did you guess what it was?"

Doris turned her radiant eyes full upon him, and smiled, and blushed.

"Yes, I guessed," she said, very softly.

"Did you?"

Laurence breathed more freely. If she was prepared for it, if she had guessed at his news, half the difficulty had vanished, he thought.

"I—I fancied you would; you were

always so quick and clever, Doris. I—I would have told you before, but I was not quite sure myself; and it makes a man feel such a fool if he takes too much for granted, and talks about such things, you know, before he is quite sure of his answer," Laurence went on, with a shy, boyish laugh and blush, "so I thought I would wait a little."

Doris looked at him with a little surprise.

"Oh, but you need not have been afraid, Laurie," she said, and there was a sweet, amused accent in her clear voice. "You might have been quite sure what your answer would be."

"I don't know so much about that. Every one does not look at me through your spectacles, dear Doris," Laurence answered; and he patted her hand tenderly. "And when a girl is so beautiful, you know, and all the fellows are mad after her, and she might pick and choose where she likes, how could I feel quite sure that she would choose me out of them all?"

Doris was so far from understanding what he meant, that she laughed—actually laughed at this speech. She wondered afterwards how she could have been so blinded by vanity as to think, as she did think, that he meant her, that it was of her he was speaking.

"Oh, Laurie, how absurd!" she said. "You have grown modest since you left Chesham. As if there was any one fit to compare with you."

Laurie smiled.

"I think being in love does generally make a man modest, and alive to his own shortcomings," he said, gravely. "It did me, I know; and sometimes when she used to flirt with the other fellows, and would scarcely give me a look or smile, I used to get quite desperate sometimes. She says now that she only did it because she was afraid that I might find out that it

was really me that she liked best all the time. You see, Doris, I could not speak just then, I had so little to offer her; it is only since I sold my last two pictures so well, and saw, as I think I do see now"—and Laurence raised his head proudly, and his eyes flashed—"the way to success open before me, that I dared to speak. She is so pretty, Doris; her eyes are as blue and bright as that bit of blue sky up there, and her hair is the colour of corn when it is at the ripest, and her complexion is just milk and roses. All the fellows rave about her."

The little brown hand that lay in Laurence's had grown strangely cold and trembling; but Laurence did not notice it, or the startled look of utter incredulity and despair which Doris flung at him as he spoke. He was thinking far too much of his golden-haired sweetheart's pretty face, to notice how the bright colour, which he had admired so much a moment before, had fled from Doris's cheeks, or the scared, frightened look which had come into her grey eyes, and swept across her face, and left it grey and haggard.

It could not be—it was impossible—the girl told herself, feverishly, that the fair fabric which she had built up so carefully for more than three years, had never had any foundation at all, that it lay in the dust broken and ruined! It must be some dream, some dreadful dream, from which she would presently awake and find that Laurence was hers again; that the girl of whom he spoke, who had eyes like the bit of blue sky on which her own eyes were now resting, and hair like the ripening corn, was only a part of the dream! And yet, at every word that Laurence spoke, the conviction of the truth, strive though she might against it, forced itself upon her, and a cold, icy band seemed to gather round her heart, and chilled her through and through, as she sat and listened mechanically to him.

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